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Orthopedic Associates
of Lancaster

Client success story

“VertitechIT makes the IT work for us, instead of us working for the IT department.”

The Company

Founded in 1972, Orthopedic Associates of Lancaster (OAL) is one of the most respected medical practices in the area – providing trusted care for generations throughout Central Pennsylvania. With locations in Lancaster and Willow Street, OAL is consistently recognized for employing the latest technology, patient-friendly staff, and most advanced medical procedures.

For more than 20 years, OAL has provided exclusive orthopedic trauma services to Lancaster General Hospital. OAL covers 100% of orthopedic trauma calls and 95% of general orthopedic calls. OAL’s board-certified team of surgeons specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of all orthopedic conditions and injuries: hand and wrist, shoulder and elbow, hip and knee, neck and back, foot and ankle, trauma and fractures, total joint replacement, pediatrics, sports medicine and work injuries. OAL’s doctors are deeply invested in providing the most advanced medical treatments available.

The Challenge

“We are one of those companies where we’re big enough to need IT support, but we don’t think it should be that difficult,” says Bill Weik, OAL’s Chief Executive Officer/practice administrator. “We went paperless in 2003, as one of the first practices to do so, and that started us on the path of becoming more dependent on technology.”

Weik says OAL had already installed a practice management system and email, which met the practice’s needs back then. “When it came to tech support, we had an outsourced company that would come in a couple of days a week. But when we installed a PACS system in 2006, we decided we wanted an internal resource.”

Bringing IT in-house didn’t solve OAL’s challenges. If anything, it made it a bit worse. “He was trying to handle everything by himself. Essentially, he was by himself on an island,” says Doug Price, OAL’s Chief Financial Officer. “He was trying to be the network engineer, the desktop manager and more. He fixed things and did things that proved to be detrimental over time to our existing systems. It was like putting a bandage on a serious infection. He’d temporarily fix the problem, just trying to keep things moving along, but things kept getting worse.”

Going back to an outsourced service provider didn’t help, either. “We went live with our electronic medical records (EMR) system through a local hospital,” Weik says. “But if an issue came up where something needed to be fixed, there was too much finger-pointing. I never felt comfortable feeling that we received a true value for what we paid.” Weik says the firm OAL hired was far more tactical in its approach; everything it did was based on an hourly rate. “We felt like we were spending too much time saying, ‘how much will this cost,’ not ‘how will this make us better,’” Price notes. “We couldn’t get to the point where we were comfortable with them.”



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The Solution: VertitechIT

OAL was looking for another alternative; Weik and Price were seeking a service provider that would treat the relationship as more of a partnership. They found it, after talking with the Chief Information Officer of the hospital with whom they were aligned. "He said we should talk with VertitechIT, since he was already working with them," Weik says. "We thought this was worth pursuing, especially as we moved toward integrating our practice; we thought they'd have a better understanding of what was coming down the road, which would help us prepare and implement cleanly." This was especially true, since OAL was the first large specialty practice in its region to implement an Epic software system.

From the start, it was evident that VertitechIT's professionals knew far more than just the technology; they had a great deal of business knowledge. The VertitechIT team spent time working with OAL on a complete network overhaul that was needed, demonstrating not only their competence but their commitment as well. "They told us why we needed to do it, and what would happen if we didn't. It was crystal clear. You didn't need an IT degree to understand what they were saying. It was also obvious that they got the healthcare perspective, that we needed to be bulletproof from a HIPAA perspective," Weik says.

"VertitechIT helped us understand what we were going to get and how it would benefit us," Price adds. "They submitted a proposal to overhaul every server and every PC...everything except the Cat 5 wire. They came up with a set price, and said they wouldn't exceed that price. That impressed me, and spoke to their confidence, since they assumed part of the risk."

VertitechIT's experts delivered. They were on-time and on-budget, consistently meeting or beating their deadlines. "If they said it needed to be done, we knew it would be done," Weik notes. As a result, OAL has engaged VertitechIT to provide it with ongoing, on-site technical support. "It's like we have internal IT staff, but it's outsourced at a fixed cost. We have someone here on staff every day. We have all the benefits that come with outsourcing, but it feels like they're our employees." OAL has even made VertitechIT part of its IT committee. "They participate as if they're part of us," Price says, "and take responsibility to a larger degree," even pointing out the cost benefits of leasing new equipment rather than buying it, something OAL had routinely done in the past.

The Future

"VertitechIT makes the IT work for us, instead of us working for the IT department," Weik says. "Since we're so IT dependent, we got beyond the frustrations. Now, we're running our business and IT's there to support it."

Weik says he considers VertitechIT to be a part of the OAL team. "I have a stack of their business cards, and if someone asks, I give them a business card. I spoke to my counterpart with a local radiology practice about them, and we referred them to an eye practice here in town to help them with selection of an EMR/EHR." OAL's doctors, he says, have a sense that things are different from an IT perspective. "I believe they have a sense of the fact that we're headed in the right direction. We credit VertitechIT."